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FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7234
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 4543
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1675
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY 3584
RUEHSV/AMEMBASSY SUVA 0121
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1223
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 2097
RUEHBAD/AMCONSUL PERTH 0484
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RHHJJPI/USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L JAKARTA 003293

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NSC FOR E.PHU

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SUBJECT: NORTH MALUKU -- JAKARTA INTERVENES AS ELECTION
DISPUTE ROLLS ON

REF: JAKARTA 3236 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Pol/C Joseph Legend Novak, reasons 1.4(b,d).

11. (U) This message was coordinated with Consulate General Surabaya.

12. (C) SUMMARY: President Yudhoyono has named an interim governor in the eastern Indonesian province of North Maluku. The move is designed to prevent a vacancy in the province's top position while a heated dispute over the results of North Maluku's first-ever direct gubernatorial election rolls on. A week earlier, the National Electoral Commission had handed the victory to the opposition candidate. The naming of an interim governor may temporarily calm the waters and put a lid for now on inter-ethnic tension. END SUMMARY.

13. (SBU) PRESIDENT INTERVENES: Jakarta has intervened in the North Maluku election. On November 29, President Yudhoyono named Timbul Pudjianto, Director General for Administrative Affairs in the Department of Home Affairs, as interim Governor of North Maluku province in eastern Indonesia. In making the announcement, Home Affairs Minister H. Mardiyanto said the appointment would remain in effect pending the outcome of a legal dispute over the results of the recent gubernatorial election. (Note: Lawyers for the incumbent governor have filed suit with the Supreme Court over the national electoral body's decision to award the election to the opposition candidate.)

14. (SBU) A FESTERING DISPUTE: North Maluku's campaign for governor and the election have been snake-bitten from the start. In a campaign marked by riots and other turbulence, the province's first-ever direct gubernatorial election began under a cloud of controversy amid accusations that the local election board was showing favoritism towards the incumbent governor. When the local board announced a victory by the incumbent by the slimmest of margins on November 18, the KPU took the unprecedented step of moving the vote recount to Jakarta. Four days later, the KPU handed the victory to the opposition candidate by less than 3,000 votes. Three of the four candidates signed off on the results, while the incumbent announced that he would appeal the decision (ref A). According to reports, the suit will allege that the KPU

overstepped its authority when it overruled the election result.

¶5. (SBU) TENSE BUT CALM: Tensions over the election are visible in North Maluku (the candidates are from different ethnic groups). The province, however, remains calm despite the uncertainty surrounding the results. Several hundred demonstrators staged a protest against the KPU's decision to take over the recount, but no violence was reported. Security forces have remained on alert in the province, which experienced intense communal violence from 1999 to 2001.

¶6. (C) JAKARTA BUYS TIME: The decision to appoint an interim governor should placate both sides for now. Reluctant as the central government clearly was to intervene in local democratic processes, Jakarta seems to have taken an even-handed approach. Eventually, however, the Supreme Court will have to declare a winner. That decision should be transparent or there could be problems; if questions remain, ethnic tensions could mount in North Maluku. Less clear is how the KPU will fare. Hurt by corruption scandals after the last election, the KPU will need strong support from the public to carry out its duties effectively over the next election cycle.

HUME